

Changing of the Guard

Gus Von Bodungen, former DEQ Assistant Secretary of the Office of Environmental Services, passed away in May leaving behind a far reaching legacy and many fond memories. Gus announced his retirement from DEQ earlier this year after 29 years of helping to improve the quality of life in Louisiana. His achievements in air quality were outstanding.

Gus received a degree in Chemical Engineering from Louisiana Tech in 1954. On the occasion of his retirement, Gus said that as a professional engineer, "I've got one of the oldest licenses around." He worked in private industry around the state for approximately 14 years and spent two years in the Army. He began working in the Air Quality Section as Assistant Chief at the Health Department on August 20, 1970. In 1979, consolidation of environmental programs sent him to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and eventually to DEQ when it was organized in 1984.

Gus said that he started working at about the same time the federal government revised the Air Quality Act. The Act required the state to comply with the ambient air standards, which were set by EPA. At the time, Gus said, the standards were being violated across I-10 and below it and the state was in violation of the ozone standard wherever it was measured.

The Clean Air Act was revised several times over the years, and each time the standards became tighter. A workgroup was formed of 32 states to help each other deal with coming into compliance with the act. The Ozone Transport Assessment Group (OTAG) met every month to discuss compliance activities. "The thing that

makes me so proud about that," Gus said, "is we were the only state in that 32-state region (that) turned in a complete State Implementation Plan (SIP) on time in November of 1994." DEQ's SIP was the first to be approved in the 32-state region.

Gus had many success stories from his tenure with the state. During his time here, the air quality section had redesignated more non-attainment areas than any other state. He even received a citation from the governor for redesignating 11 parishes in one day.

Gus attributed those successes to the dedicated and hard working people in his department and the state government. He said that the legislators and the governors have always been supportive and helpful.

"The detractors of the Department do not have any real evidence of astounding air pollution," according to Gus. "Its unbelievable, the difference. People say we haven't done anything, (that) things are worse. There's no validity to that statement. I can show you where vents used to be that are now controlled. You can see it in the results in how we've constantly got the ambient air standard down, in every area that we attacked."



Gus Von Bodungen
Former DEQ Assistant
Secretary Office of
Environmental Services

Since 1970, Gus Von Bodungen had alternately been the head of the Air Quality Division or Assistant Secretary. He attributed the success in his career to doing the best job that he could and loving what he did. Everyone that he worked for felt that he did good work. "I enjoyed every minute of it, even when the times were tough," Gus said.

Another highlight of his career was the recognition that he and his department received from the EPA. "The proof of the pudding is how we could get the job done and others couldn't."

His other accomplishments included serving on the Board of Directors for the Air Waste Management Association. He sat on the board of the international organization for four years. Gus was also on the Standard Air Monitoring Working Group for the EPA for approximately 20 years.

Gus drove over an hour everyday for 29 years to get from his home in New Orleans to work in Baton Rouge. He laughed saying he, "...always felt that I could probably be a truck driver."

Gus dedicated his life to protecting the air and the environment. DEQ greatly appreciates his hard work and dedication.

He will be missed.



DERAILMENT IN EUNICE

Continued from page 12



Pictured at left, Doug Bradford, DEQ Geologist and Jeffrey Meyers, Emergency Response Coordinator.

Pictured at right is an aerial view of the derailment site showing the large area burned by the intense fire.



remediation might be necessary.

It is difficult to tell how long the investigation and remediation of the Eunice site will take. Doug said, "It's a living type of process where it's subject to change depending upon (the) conditions. We'll make sure it is done in accordance with regulations."



CLOSEUP

DEQ's LEGAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

Continued from page 10

seen more and more court decisions on environmental law. These decisions are helpful because the Environmental Quality Act, as with any new statute creating a regulatory scheme, is the skeleton, fleshed out over time by use, by rule-making and by judicial and Agency interpretations. It's important to have court decisions interpreting our statutes and regulations; they provide outside perspective on Agency interpretations and actions, allowing for consistency and guidance."

As for the growing caseload that results from the increase in activity in environmental forums, Robinson is philosophical: "This country was founded on the principles of due process that are spelled out in the United States and Louisiana Constitutions. Any individual is entitled to his or her day in court. That's due process. It's slow and it's cumbersome sometimes, but that's the American system and we live with it. We try to participate in that process as effective and efficient advocates for the Agency."

Finally, Robinson says he believes strongly in DEQ's positions regarding environmental matters and finds the work "very gratifying. It's a good area of the law and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the pursuit of environmental law to anyone who is interested."

